



North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation

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Michael F. Easley  
Governor

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William G. Ross Jr.  
Secretary, DENR

# DEAL EXPANDS HAW RIVER PARK

Haw River State Park will grow to nearly 1,000 acres in late February when the state parks system completes the purchase of 692 acres that had earlier been slated to be a residential golf community.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources and Bluegreen Corp., a Florida development company, announced the agreement in January on the property near

the headwaters of the Haw River in northern Guilford and southern Rockingham counties.

Under the agreement, the state will purchase three tracts held by Bluegreen for \$14 million. The acquisition will be financed through certificates of participation to be repaid with future revenues into the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

The property, assembled by Bluegreen over

the past year, will be added to about 300 acres the state parks system acquired since 2004 to establish the park and which includes The Summit environmental education center.

The acquisition will give the new state park a larger land base of significant natural resource value and the potential to develop traditional state park amenities alongside the

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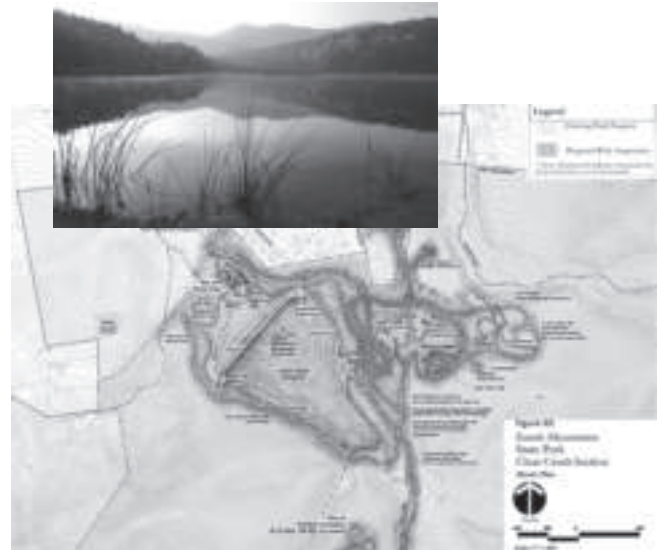
# SOUTH MOUNTAINS PLANS FOR FUTURE

The Division of Parks and Recreation has updated a broad master plan for South Mountains State Park that will guide development of new facilities, including a residential environmental education center as the centerpiece of a new gateway at the park's western edge.

The plan for the 17,832-acre state park in Burke County, the state's largest, also calls for expanding camping and day use facilities, upgrading the park's popular equestrian center and trails system and universal design features to serve special needs populations at the planned environmental education center, dormitory-style cabins and dining hall.

The original master plan for South Mountains was written in 1979 when the park was about half its current size. Most of the land added since that time is near U.S. 64 and west of a mountain ridge that bisects the park.

In 2000, the Department of Agriculture transferred the 2,556-acre Broughton Watershed to the park. In 2003, the Department of Health and Human Services dedicated 450 acres to the



*THE CLEAR CREEK SECTION (INSET) WILL BE THE SITE FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER.*

park and pledged to help create an environmental education center that would serve all citizens, but offer state-of-the-art accessibility features for special needs populations.

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Department of Environment and Natural Resources

# UP CLOSE AND 'PERSONNEL'

## **Stephanie Richardson**

is a new park designer with the division. She holds master's degrees in natural resources and landscape management from N.C. State University and bachelor's degrees in English and Spanish from the University of Virginia. She has worked for a private landscape design firm and for the Duke University Primate Center and the Memphis Zoo and Aquarium.

## **James Best**

is a new maintenance mechanic at New River State Park. He has worked at the park as a general utility worker and is a Baptist minister. He attended N.C. State University.

## **David Johnson**

joined the staff at Gorges State Park as a ranger. He holds an associate's degree in forestry from Valencia Community College in Orlando, Fla., and a bachelor's

degree in wildlife ecology/forestry from the University of Florida. He previously worked at the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education.

## **Amy Bernhardt**

is a new ranger at Lake Waccamaw State Park. She completed high school in Salisbury and graduated from UNC- Wilmington in 2006 with a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management and environmental studies. She previously worked for Rowan County Parks and Recreation.

## **Steve McMurray**

joined the staff of Jordan Lake State Recreation Area as a ranger. He is a 1994 graduate of California State University at Long Beach with a bachelor's degree in recreation and leisure studies. He has more than 10 years related experience as a counselor and administrator at residential facilities for at-risk youth.

## **Sandy Franzen**

has joined the division in the newly created position of concession/enterprise manager. She grew up in Nags Head and earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from East Carolina University and a master's degree from UNC-Wilmington. She has worked in a variety of financial services and marketing roles over the past 14 years.

## **Clark Tobin**

has joined the staff of Jordan Lake State Recreation Area as a ranger. A graduate of Winona State University in Minnesota with a bachelor's degree in environmental science, he previously worked as an N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission officer and with the U.S. Forest Service in Taos and Albuquerque, NM.

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## **From The Director's Desk**

In the past few weeks, I've had opportunity to tell the state parks story in a variety of venues – a civic club in High Point, the annual meeting of the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail and DENR's first Environmental Education Forum at The Summit at Haw River State Park.

Naturally, the focus of each presentation was on a different aspect of our efforts. Each audience had its own questions and interests. But, some common themes did emerge. One is that interest groups, shareholders and the public in general are very interested in what we're doing and, for the most part, are impressed by our commitment and sense of mission. Occasionally, behind all the programs and the stunning scenery of the state parks, they're able to glimpse a very professional and dedicated staff. Lately, we've enjoyed a good measure of public support and our responsibility in the state parks family is to strive to maintain that confidence.

It was a very professional effort by all our staff – and that confidence by our friends and stakeholders – that resulted in the expansion of Haw River State Park by almost 700 acres. That acquisition should be completed by the end of this month. That combination of dedication and confidence led to many accomplishments in 2007 that are catalogued elsewhere in this newsletter.

And, thanks and congratulations go to Friends of State Parks and Niche Publishing (Bill Pendergraft and Ida Lynch) for publication of two new and impressive books about the state parks system that are also noted in The Steward this month. Both books also help tell our story in exciting new ways, and both are available for sale in our parks. It's good to have friends such as these.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

# HOMESCHOOLERS IMPRESSED BY STATE PARKS

A succession of exciting interpretive programs during 2007 prompted a homeschool cooperative recently to make a donation to the state parks through the nonprofit Friends of State Parks.

Dream and Discover, a Durham-based family learning cooperative donated \$220, which was 10 percent of the profits from its fall fundraiser.

Nancy Walters of the organization said the home-schooled children had wonderful experiences in several state parks during the year.

"I don't remember all the ranger's names. But boy, do we remember the experiences," Wal-

ters said. "Without fail, the rangers were informative, patient and fun. What beautiful places and what an amazing service. This donation is just the smallest token of our appreciation."

During the year, the children enjoyed the "Catch a Sure Thing" fishing program at Jordan Lake, searched for dragonflies at William B. Umstead State Park, watched a meteor shower at Falls Lake, toured Hanging Rock State Park and explored aquatic life in the Eno River.

The cooperative allows home-schooled children to join together for extra-curricular activities such as field trips, outside play and crafts.

## PERSONNEL

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**John Privette** is a new ranger at Lumber River State Park. He attended high school in Monroe and graduated in 2004 from Appalachian State University with a bachelor's degree in recreation management. He has been a seasonal employee Carolina Beach State Park.

**Sean Higgins** has joined the division as education development consultant with responsibility for interpretive and education programming. He received a bachelor's degree in biology education from Virginia Tech University and a master's degree in zoology from Miami University in Ohio. He previously worked from the

N.C. Cooperative Extension Service, the Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department and the San Francisco Conservation Corps.

**Kevin Bischof** is a new ranger at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area. He attended high school and the University of Cincinnati in Cincinnati, Ohio, and earned a master's degree in outdoor recreation from Indiana University. He completed an internship at Glacier National Park in 2005.

**Torry Nergart** joined the staff at Haw River State Park as a ranger. A graduate of North Stokes High School and Western Carolina University with a bachelor's degree in

natural resource management, he has taught at Haywood Community College and has been a seasonal employee at Hanging Rock State Park.

**Theresa Hagerman** joined the staff at Haw River State Park as a cook. She attended Truman High School in Arkansas and has more than 10 years related experience including earlier employment at the state park.

**Ronnie Hawks** has been promoted to Maintenance Mechanic III at Pilot Mountain State Park. He joined the park staff in 2000 and is a graduate of South Stokes High School. He has more than 15 years of related experience.

## 'PARK' IT

WITH A STATE PARKS  
SPECIALTY LICENSE TAG

*The Division of Parks and Recreation is accepting applications and payment for the first 300 license plates. There is a \$30 fee in addition to regular license fees (\$60 for personalized plates). Additional fees support conservation through the Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage trust funds.*

**Applications online at [www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov)**  
**or write: Adrienne McCoig, N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation**  
**1615 MSC, Raleigh, NC 27699-1615**



# PARKS GROW BY 8,000+ ACRES IN '07

In 2007, the state parks system brought 8,042 acres of land into conservation, the most notable acquisition being the 996-acre Chimney Rock Park, which is being incorporated into the larger Chimney Rock State Park in the Hickory Nut Gorge.

That is but one of the 2007 accomplishments reported by the Division of Parks and Recreation in its annual report to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The report also noted advances in capital projects, trails projects, development of partnerships and personnel development.

For the parks system, the year got off to a strong start in January as Gov. Mike Easley announced the \$24 million acquisition of Chimney Rock Park, a premier partnership effort involving three conservation trust funds, the General Assembly, land conservancies and local communities.

The deal closed in May and was accompanied by an agreement with Chimney Rock Company Management LLC to continue to operate the attraction through at least 2009 while it is integrated into the larger state park.

During the year, the state park grew to about 3,500 acres spanning both sides of the gorge.

Other results from more than 200 active land acquisition projects included expanding Medoc Mountain State Park with 1,507 acres of former International Paper Corp. land and 10 properties containing 301 acres added to the developing Mayo River State Park.

Also, 249 acres in an important watershed were added to Lake Norman State Park, the largest acquisition since the park's creation in 1962.

Also in 2007, the General Assembly authorized the Deep River State Trail, and initial land was acquired in Chatham County to establish it as a state parks system unit. The trail is envisioned as a network of state and locally owned conservation and recreation lands stretching through five counties along the river corridor.

The division's State Trails Program in 2007 initiated a corridor plan with local governments for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail in the western piedmont from Stone Mountain State Park through Guilford County and continues to fine tune corridor plans for the eastern piedmont and eastern sections of the 1,000-mile route.

In October, a 15.1-mile segment of the trail along the Blue Ridge Parkway in Ashe and Alleghany counties was dedicated.

## **Facilities**

In June, improvements to the US 221 Access at New River State Park were dedicated. They include a 14,000-square-foot visitor center, campground, picnic grounds and maintenance complex representing an investment of \$6.6 million from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

At year's end, the division had more than 50 active design and development projects under way, including new visitor centers planned at Dismal Swamp, Merchants Millpond and Raven Rock state parks, a new observation platform at Mount Mitchell State Park and development of infrastructure at Gorges State Park.

In addition, master plans were completed for a 3,000-acre addition at Lake James State Park and for South Mountains State Park, which incorporates detailed plans for an environmental education center in the park's western Clear Creek section.

## **Trust Fund**

A total of \$17 million was channeled into local park acquisition and development projects through 54 matching grants from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, administered by the division.

In the 14-year history of the fund, more than \$108 million has been awarded through 531 matching grants to municipal and county recreation programs in all areas of the state.

The 2007 General Assembly expanded the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority from 9 to 15 members. The new appointees are Thomas Blue, Daryle Bost, Robert Epting, H. Boyd Lee, Phil McKnelly, Hollis Wild and Edward Wood.

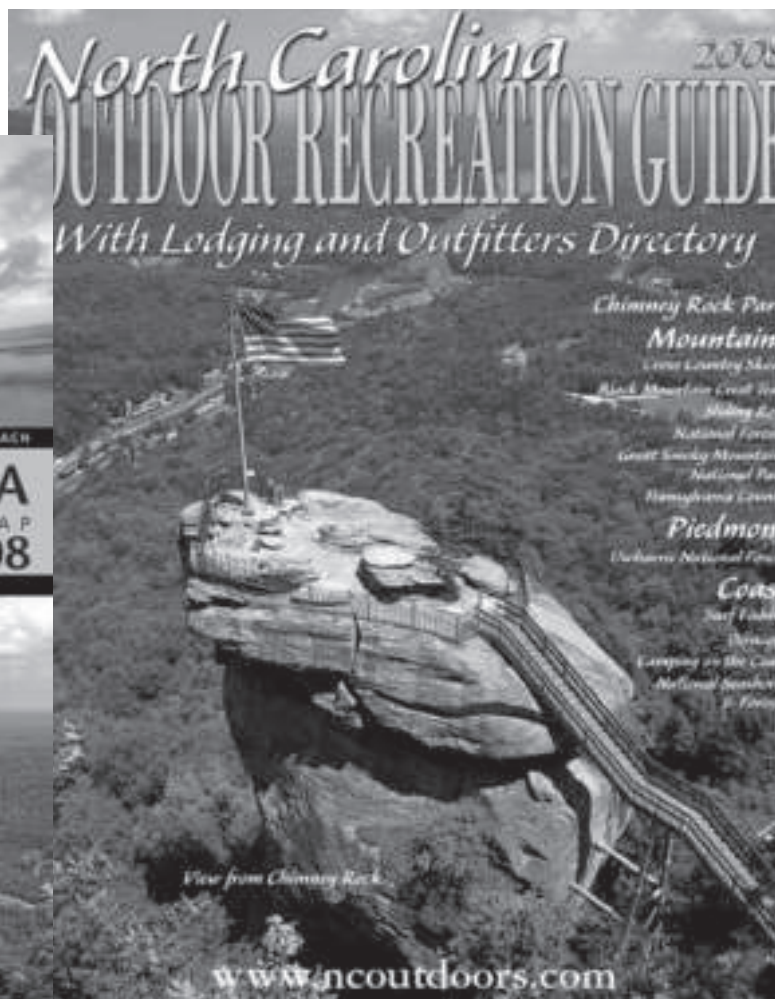
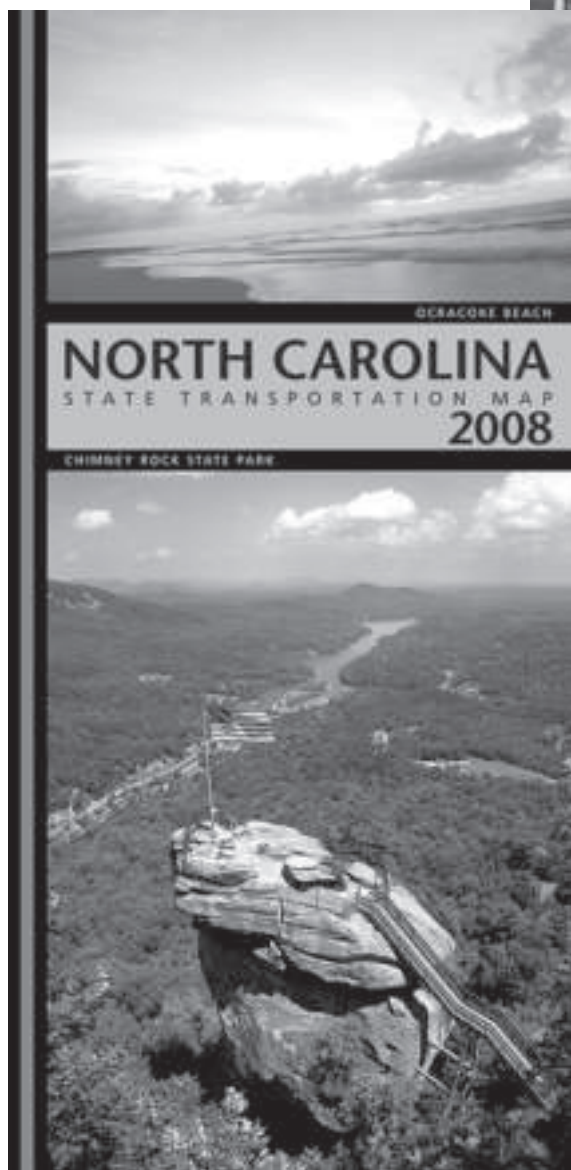
## **Partnerships**

The division established a Natural Resource Research Advisory Committee to open dialogue with universities and scholars about potential research projects in the state parks.

The parks system also partnered with North Carolina Audubon, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service and N.C. Sea Grant to inaugurate the eastern North Carolina Birding Trail. Fourteen of its 102 initial sites are state parks.

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## ***THE CHIMNEY'S SMOKIN'***

*CHIMNEY ROCK, THE SIGNATURE LANDMARK OF THE NEW CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK, LANDED ON THE COVER OF BOTH THE 2008 STATE TRANSPORTATION MAP OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AS WELL AS THE POPULAR OUTDOOR RECREATION GUIDE DISTRIBUTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE.*

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4*

The division teamed with conservation organizations to initiate oyster reef construction at Jockey's Ridge and Hammocks Beach state parks and to create stormwater mitigation and erosion protection projects at Hammocks Beach.

Through its association with the National Association of State Park Directors, the division honored Mike Leonard and Dick Ludington of The Conservation Fund and Sen. Walter Dalton with NASPD conservation awards to recognize their efforts in arranging the agreement to add Chimney Rock Park to the Chimney Rock State Park project.

### **Development**

Sixty state park rangers and division employees earned environmental education certification through the Office of Environmental Education, representing nearly one third of the state's annual certification.

To further define its identity, the division launched a program to issue state parks license plates and redesigned and expanded its Web site to include more data-based information and more information about such programs as state trails, resource management and employment opportunities.

# HAW RIVER STATE PARK

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residential learning campus of The Summit.

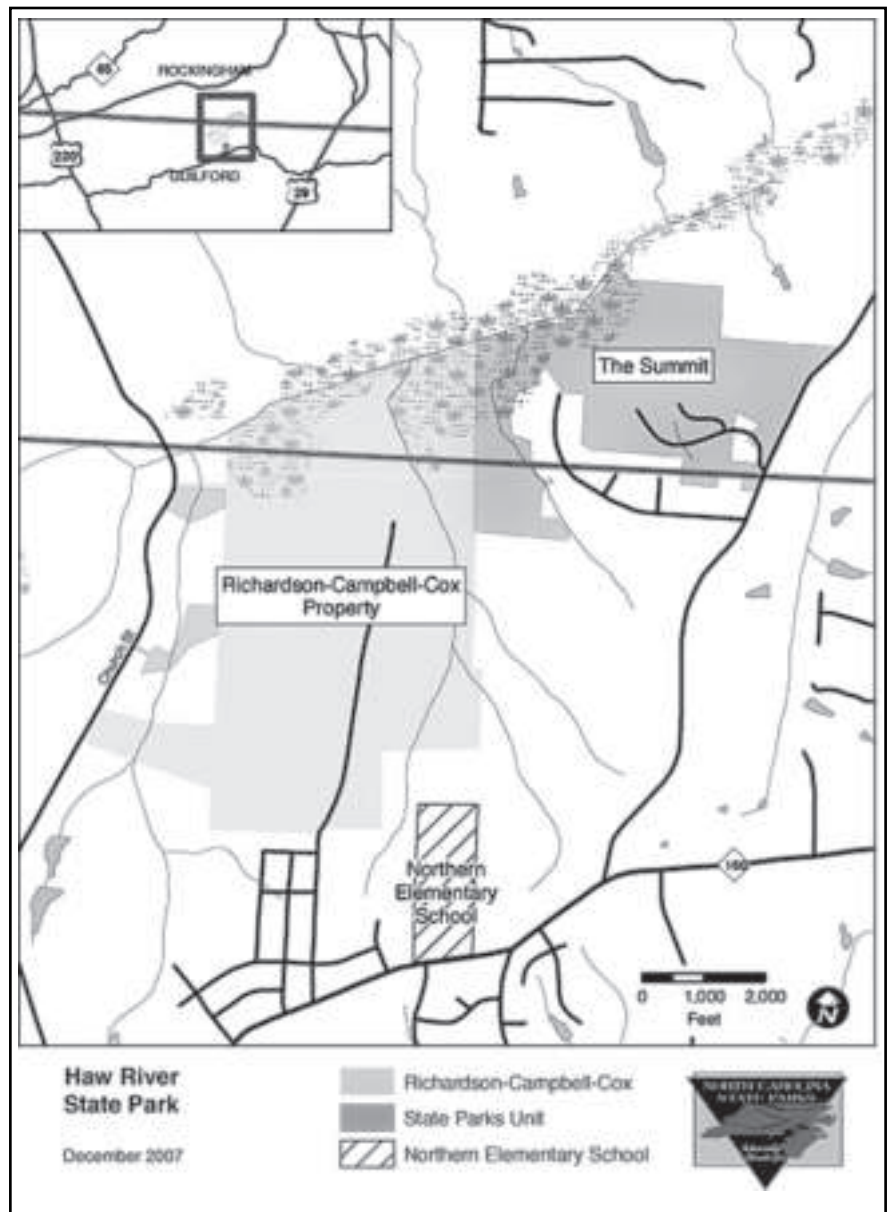
“This agreement is a reflection of Bluegreen Corp.’s good corporate citizenship in North Carolina,” Bill Ross, secretary of the department, said. “When Bluegreen officials became aware that the state parks system had a sincere interest in this property and the means to pay fair market value, they were willing to negotiate in good faith. The result will be a vibrant state park that will offer conservation, recreation and education for future generations as this region develops.”

Negotiations between the State Property Office, the state parks system and Bluegreen Corp. of Boca Raton, Fla., began in August after Guilford County’s planning board approved a Bluegreen request to rezone the property allow the planned density for the development project.

That decision was quickly appealed to county commissioners by David Craft, organizer of an ad hoc group, Citizens for Haw River State Park. The group also posted a Web site supporting the park.

Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system, said that community involvement and the General Assembly’s commitment to funding conservation made the agreement possible.

“The legislature’s decision in its last session for up to \$50 million in certificates of participation to be issued through the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund allows us to respond to opportunities such as this,” Ledford said. “Local park supporters were strong advocates for the conser-



vation of this property and their voices were heard.”

In a prepared statement, Bluegreen officials said, “Bluegreen is most interested in being a good neighbor and a good corporate citizen in the communities where we invest. We believe that our agreement with the state is in the best interest of all parties involved.”

The property lies just west and adjacent to The Summit campus and was identified by the state parks system as a desirable acquisition as plan-

ning for the new state park began in earnest in 2003. The park was authorized by the General Assembly that year.

The Haw River headwaters area was one of only 12 sites in the state deemed suitable for a new state park in the system’s 2001 *New Parks for a New Century* initiative.

In 2006, Susan McBean was named the park’s first superintendent.

The park remains in the land acquisition stage with

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# SOUTH MOUNTAINS

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"The growth of South Mountains State Park presents challenges but also creates exciting opportunities," said Lewis Ledford, division director. "This master plan will allow the park to develop its potential as a place where all citizens can connect with the natural world in very special ways and where some of the region's most stunning natural resources can be protected."

The master plan was prepared over about one year's time by Swanson and Associates, P.A. of Carrboro with input from the division's planning staff and from the park staff as well as from citizens through a public meeting and written comments.

For planning purposes, the park was divided into three distinct sections.

The Jacob Fork section in the east is where all existing park facilities are located, including a visitor center, which opened late in 2006. The Clear Creek section near U.S. 64 is the planned site of the environmental education center and related facilities.

The Henry's Fork section in the park's interior will be left largely undisturbed.

Much of the park's interior is a dedicated nature preserve with extremely rugged terrain. Planners were intent on keeping new facilities near the park's boundaries and maintaining a backcountry experience in the interior with trails and primitive campsites.

The master plan calls for the campus of the environmental education center in the Clear Creek section to include picnic grounds, an interpretive



*MUCH OF THE STATE PARK'S INTERIOR WILL BE LEFT UNDISTURBED.*

hiking trail, fishing and boating piers on an existing 20-acre lake, open play fields, an amphitheater, group campsites, cabins and a dining hall.

This would be the division's third environmental education center, complementing a day use facility at Goose Creek State Park and The Summit conference center at Haw River State Park.

In South Mountains' Jacob Fork section, tent and trailing camping will be expanded and improvements will

be made to an equestrian center that now includes a horse barn and campground. The park's maintenance compound will also be moved and expanded.

The master plan identifies some potential future land acquisitions that could improve campground development on both sides of the park.

A complete copy of the new master plan can be found on the division's Web site ([www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov)) by clicking "News" on the park's home page.

## HAW RIVER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

ongoing negotiations with other willing sellers in the vicinity.

The citizens group of about 250 people is considering a name change to Friends of Haw River State Park.

Craft, also a member of the citizen park advisory committee, told the Greensboro News & Record, "This is what we have worked so hard for, to

give the state park a chance to really get off the ground, so we can create a large and valuable recreation area for generations to come."

Strong support for the land deal also came from the Greensboro Partnership business group, the City of Reidsville, scout councils and tourism development agencies.

# 'FRIENDS' PUBLISH PARKS GUIDEBOOK

The nonprofit Friends of State Parks (FSP) announced publication of the North Carolina State Parks Map Guide. This 121-page comprehensive guide contains up-to-date park maps and information for all active state parks, state recreation areas and state natural areas as well as information on new parks in development.

Profits from sale of the books will support FSP projects in the parks, including environmental education.

The 8.5x11-inch, coil-bound volume serves as a coffee-table book for trip planning as well as a backpack reference guide. The coil binding allows easy viewing of maps in the field.

"This publication is a continuation of our role as a support organization for our best-in-the-nation state parks system and the outstanding people in the Division of Parks and Recreation. This partnership has served the over 12 million annual visitors to our state parks for over three decades," said FSP President John Graham.

"This is another tool to encourage support for and use of our naturally wonderful state parks."

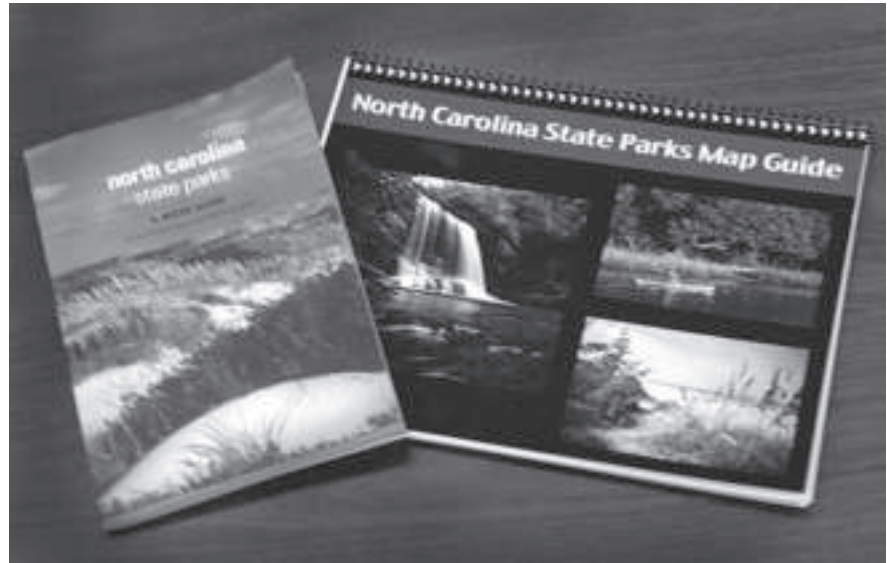
The North Carolina State Parks Map Guide offers a detailed map of each park unit showing trails and facilities. Accompanying text gives a brief description of the park, travel directions, information of visitor services and trail descriptions.

The book comes with a free service for FSP members to receive updated maps and maps of new parks as they are created.

To view sample contents and order the book, visit the FSP Web site at [www.ncfsp.org/mapguide.html](http://www.ncfsp.org/mapguide.html). Cost is \$18. Many state parks also offer the book for sale.

Friends of State Parks is a citizens group formed in 1973 and dedicated to the understanding, enjoyment and protection of North Carolina's state

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## NICHE GUIDE SPOTLIGHTS GRANDEUR OF STATE PARKS

The first updated guidebook to North Carolina state parks to be published in almost 20 years is now available for purchase from traditional and online booksellers.

Niche Publishing LLC released North Carolina State Parks: A Niche Guide in October. The first in a series of Niche publications that explore the connections between people and place, the guide builds on the work of the 1989 comprehensive State Parks of North Carolina by Walter C. Biggs Jr. and James F. Parnell. Both are offered by John F. Blair, Publisher, of Chapel Hill.

Niche Publishing LLC is a partnership of Ida Phillips Lynch and Bill Pendergraft.

The new Niche guide features chapters about state parks, recreation areas and

natural areas, as well as "Parks in Progress," which highlights soon-to-be-opened parks and natural areas.

Organized geographically from the mountains to the coastal plain, each park chapter includes contact information, a general description, location, size, amenities, special features, safety tips and list of nearby natural areas, along with hyperlinks to related Web sites.

The book provides GPS coordinates for each park enabling visitors to create maps and directions to parks online.

A special emphasis of the guide is color photography, and the authors have included 185 full-color photographs to capture a sense of each park's unique character and natural features.

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# REI GRANT BOOSTS PARK PROGRAMS

Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI) presented a \$5,000 grant in December to Haw River State Park for a water ecology program. The grant was channeled through the state-wide Friends of State Parks.

Bobby Thomas, outreach specialist for REI in Greensboro, said the grant will be used to furnish six canoes and safety equipment to replace equipment that had aged so badly the program had languished.

Thomas said that Ranger Torry Nergart suggested the idea. Water ecology is one of the signature environmental education programs presented by the park's Haw River Program.

The state park is the site of The Summit residential envi-



*JASON LANE OF REI, RIGHT, PRESENTS A CHECK TO JOHN GRAHAM OF FRIENDS OF STATE PARKS. LOOKING ON, FROM LEFT, ARE BOBBY THOMAS OF REI IN GREENSBORO, LEWIS LEDFORD, DIVISION DIRECTOR, AND SUE McBEAN, HAW RIVER STATE PARK SUPERINTENDENT.*

ronmental education center.

John Graham, president of Friends of State Parks, praised Nergart's initiative in securing the grant.

"He has what it takes to be a state park ranger," Graham said. "He's creative, has initiative and just does what it takes to get the job done."

## NICHE GUIDE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

The book provides information about Friends of State Parks and local park friends groups, along with a summary of North Carolina's conservation community. Also included are a selected bibliog-

raphy and what the authors call "a completely biased guide" to the best of state parks.

A companion Niche Publishing Web site at [www.nichepress.com](http://www.nichepress.com) is under construction to include anecdotes

about state parks, video content, updated information, photographs and other features.

North Carolina State Parks: A Niche Guide is available at \$14.95 at many state parks and from book retailers.

## 'FRIENDS'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

raphy and what the authors call "a completely biased guide" to the best of state parks.

Friends of State Parks promotes public awareness of the immense contributions of these natural areas to the quality of life for North Carolinians of present and future generations.



## TOYS FOR TOTS

HAMMOCKS BEACH STATE PARK AGAIN CONDUCTED SPECIAL WINTER MARSH CRUISES TO COLLECT TOYS. A TOTAL 459 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE 24 CRUISES AND BROUGHT 573 TOYS FOR THE U.S. MARINE CORPS TO REDISTRIBUTE.

# DROUGHT UNCOVERS SOME BONEYARDS

Record low water levels of 2007's drought have produced an unexpected bonanza for researchers and the state parks exhibits program.

Triassic-era fossils suggesting a phytosaur, were uncovered at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area in October. And, 4,000-year-old remains of a Pleistocene-era whale have been located beneath shallow water at Lake Waccamaw. Both have drawn the attention of researchers at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences.

In October, Charles Zidar, head of the parks' exhibits program, happened upon Triassic sediments exposed by the low water levels. Investigating the weathered red mudstone/sandstone, he found bone fragments believed to be from a phytosaur, a 220 mil-



*RESEARCHERS SIFT THROUGH SOIL AT JORDAN LAKE'S SHORELINE.*

lion-year-old carnivore, similar to the modern-day crocodiles. later. Vince Schneider, curator of paleontology for the museum, said this was the first time a discovery has been made at Jordan Lake.

park's new visitor center.

Triassic strata exist in just a few places around North Carolina and surface exposure of the sediment is even more rare. Triassic fauna predate Jurassic and Cretaceous creatures by millions of years. Dinosaurs are believed to have gone extinct about 65 million years ago at the end of the Cretaceous period – 155 millions later than when phytosaurs roamed the earth.

Phytosaurs averaged in size from three to four meters long and were semi-aquatic predatory archosaurs. The long-snouted and heavily armored archosaurs bore remarkable resemblance to modern crocodiles and it is thought they shared a common ancestor.

Museum researchers plan to examine the whale remains at Lake Waccamaw, which are encased in a limestone outcrop just a few yards from the shoreline. The find has also drawn the interest of the



**PHYTOSAUR**

lion-year-old carnivore, similar to the modern-day crocodiles.

Museum researchers examined the site a few days

Bones, which include a rib, scapula (shoulder blade) and others, are being prepared at the museum for display at the



*MUSEUM RESEARCHER VINCE SCHNEIDER SCREENS SOIL FOR FRAGMENTS.*

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# CONSERVANCY HELPS ELK KNOB GROW

High Country Conservancy announced the acquisition in January of two tracts, totaling 94 acres, which will help protect the viewshed at Elk Knob State Park in Watauga County and help protect the headwaters of the New River.

The 68-acre Herbert Avery tract and the 26-acre Yount Memorial Park, which rises to the summit of Snake Mountain, will be added to the state park through grants from the Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage trust funds.

“These tracts are important pieces of the larger picture of protection in the Elk Knob and Snake Mountain region,” said HCC Land Protection Director Eric Hiegl. “By expanding and buffering the state park, we’re protecting scenic views, recreation areas and wildlife habitat.”

Elk Knob was initially established as a state natural area in 2003 with the purchase of the 5,520-foot summit by The Nature Conservancy. It was re-authorized as a state park in 2007 by the N.C. General Assembly and now encompasses more than 2,600 acres.

“Elk Knob State Park

has been an exciting success story in the cause of conservation in western North Carolina,” said Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system. “Much of that is due to our partnerships with land conservancies such as High Country Conservancy and their close cooperation with our own land acquisition team and with the state’s conservation trust funds.”

Jeffrey Scott of Frontline Conservation Real Estate brokered both deals, which closed quickly within four months.

Guenevere Abernathy, founder of a conservation real estate company, Unique Places in Durham, initially secured the Yount tract under contract before involving the conservancy in the sale. The Conservation Trust for North Carolina approved a last-minute bridge loan for the purchase. And, private donors pledged support to complete both projects.

The Yount tract, which faces the Elk Knob entrance and climbs to the ridge of Snake Mountain, was one night of sleep away from being developed. Owner Betty Yount

initially accepted an offer from a Florida developer, who had plans to build three houses on the land.

But after mulling over the future of the land that night, Yount decided instead to ensure the land would be protected forever as part of the state park.

Streams run through both properties in the headwaters area of the New River and both tracts are in significant natural heritage areas within the amphibolite mountain region known for unique plant communities and rich soils.

This decade is viewed as a last chance to protect large tracts of undeveloped land in western North Carolina, and the High Country Conservancy’s shrinking average parcel size is proof of this claim.

The region’s population continues to soar with three million more people living in North Carolina than in 1970, and the mountains are predicted to lose another 500,000 acres of forests, farms, streambanks and wildlife habitat by 2022 – a total almost as large as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

## BONES

*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10*

Smithsonian Institution.

The visible remains suggest a complete or partially complete skeleton of a creature that lived when the Carolina bay lakes region was covered by a sea.

Also in October, a large Native American burial urn dating to 800 A.D. was found at Lake Tillery in Morrow Mountain State Park.

Past discoveries in the state parks system include 2,000-year-old Indian dugout canoes at Lake Phelps in Pettigrew State Park and ancient stone tools from Falls Lake.

*WHALE VERTEBRA TAKEN FROM LAKE WACCAW  
BY LOCAL RESIDENT.*





# POETS EXTOLL MOUNT JEFFERSON

By Vicki Randolph  
New River Earth Institute

The results are in: the second annual poetry contest at Mount Jefferson State Natural Area was even more successful than anticipated with more than 200 entries. That made the judging quite intense.

The contest, open to all Ashe County students in grades K-6, was begun last year by Ranger Tom Randolph in honor of the park's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and drew more than 80 entries.

This year, there were entries from every public elementary school in the county as well as many home school participants.

"One of the reasons for a poetry contest is to help the students build a strong intellectual and emotional connection to the natural resources, ultimately so they will become good stewards of North Carolina's natural treasures," Randolph said.

The contest fosters appreciation for the local national natural landmark and also encourages development of writing and language skills, he said.

Usually, Randolph visits the county's classrooms to introduce them to concepts they're already learning in science classes and students then visit the park for hikes, hands-on activities and just some fun experiences.

Teachers appreciate Randolph's visits, as well, for he helps them reinforce and meet the state curriculum standards for a number of topics. Just about any topic taught in the schools can be touched upon when parks become classrooms.

"All of the poems submitted were works of art, and the students showed amazing command of the written word. Even the youngest poets displayed talent beyond their years," Randolph said.

The contest was divided into categories for grades K-3 and 4-6. Judges were staff and vol-



POET JOSHUA TAYLOR WAS INSPIRED BY STATE PARK.

## ***I Love the Mountains!***

*I love the mountains!  
They sit up so high  
Like they are reaching for the sky.  
Look! A bird just flew by-  
I think I can reach him-  
If I try.*

-- Joshua Taylor, Homeschooled

unteers at Mount Jefferson and New River State Park.

Winners through sixth place were awarded with outdoor equipment such as tents, sleeping bags, backpacks and flashlights, all donated by North Carolina Friends of State Parks.

First place for K-3 is Joshua Taylor, first grade, home schooled; first place for 4-6 is Mady Gonzalez, sixth grade, Westwood Elementary. Second place for K-3 is Dalton Green, first grade, home schooled; second place for 4-6 is Audrey Wilcox, sixth grade, Westwood Elementary. Third place for K-3 is Wesley Waddell, first grade, Mt. View Elementary; third place for 4-6 is Haley Cooper, fifth grade, Blue Ridge Elementary.

## ***Mount Jefferson All Day***

*Mount Jefferson stands graceful and tall,  
In the early morning.  
Thus the creatures sing their song,  
To the gigantic mountain growing.  
And in return she grants them,  
A stream to quench their thirst.*

*Mount Jefferson stands bold and tall,  
In the afternoon.*

*Thus the creatures groom her well,  
'Till she gleams like the bright full moon.  
And in return she grants to them  
A feast to stop their hunger.*

*Mount Jefferson stands bright and tall,  
At dusk.  
Thus the creatures help her,  
Go along with the circle of life.  
And in return she grants to them  
A place to go to sleep.*

-- Mady Gonzalez, Westwood Elementary

# TILLOTSON RETIRES AFTER 26 YEARS

Susan Tillotson was among the first female state park rangers in North Carolina and the first to rise to the position of chief of operations for the state parks system. But, that's not what she'll be remembered for.

"A competent professional," said Lewis Ledford, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation and Tillotson predecessor in the job. "Caring...concerned...committed."

"This is one caring, kind, good human being," said Tom Wells, another parks professional who retired from the role.

Ledford, Wells and a long line of other state parks officials came back to those terms again and again describing Tillotson's 26-year career with state parks upon her retirement at the end of November. She was honored at a retirement celebration at The Summit at Haw River State Park.



*TILLOTSON WAS AMONG THE FIRST FEMALE PARK RANGERS IN NORTH CAROLINA AND THE FIRST TO BECOME THE CHIEF OF OPERATIONS.*

Her style was one of hard work and serious determination tempered with a big sisterly sense of concern for the state parks family.

Scott Daughtry, retired south district superintendent,

said, "She injected an environmental concern and environmental ethic into everything she did and hoped that everybody else would. What I remember about Susan is that she listened to what you had to say and cared about what you had to say."

Tillotson was reared in north-central North Carolina near Kerr Lake State Recreation Area and began working there during the summers after graduating from high school. She graduated in 1979 from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a bachelor's degree in health and physical education.

After working as a teacher at the Masonic Home for Children in Oxford, N.C., she rejoined the parks system in 1981 as a park ranger at Kerr Lake. She was among the second group of state park rangers to undergo law enforcement



*WEST DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT TOM JACKSON PRESENTS A DIVISION PLAQUE TO TILLOTSON AT A RETIREMENT CEREMONY AT THE SUMMIT.*

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 14*

# MOLE WILL LEAD JORDAN LAKE SRA

Shederick Mole, superintendent at Jones Lake State Park since 2004, has been named superintendent of Jordan Lake State Recreation Area in Chatham County. Mole succeeds Greg Schneider, who was named south district superintendent in October.

A superintendent is chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

A native of Brevard County, Fla., Mole earned a bachelor's degree in parks and resort management in 1993 from Concord College in Ath-

ens, W.Va. and worked for almost 10 years as a senior ranger at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area. He holds environmental education and advanced law enforcement certifications.

"Shederick has proven his abilities as a state park superintendent and at Kerr Lake, he gained solid experience handling the broad and complex operations of a reservoir-based state recreation area," said Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system. "He's an excellent choice to head the management team at Jordan



Lake, another of our most popular state park units."

Mole said he is looking forward to the new posting.

"I am thrilled about the opportunity to work with the exemplary staff at Jordan Lake as well as the surrounding community," he said. "With the newly renovated visitor center, we will educate our citizens and visitors about the natural, cultural and historic aspects of Jordan Lake, personifying the mission of North Carolina state parks."

Jordan Lake State Recreation Area includes seven separate recreation sites on the 14,000-acre reservoir with more than 1,000 campsites. The park recorded 1.05 million visits in 2006.

## TILLOTSON

*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13*

training when it was determined in the 1990s that rangers should be commissioned officers.

She became superintendent of Eno River State Park in 1986, and was promoted to north district superintendent in 1992.

As chief operations officer beginning in 2004, Tillotson's responsibilities included park operations, resource management, environmental education programming, law enforcement, safety and facility maintenance for all the state park units.

During her tenure, the system began development of four new state parks and several new state natural areas and groundwork was laid for an internet-based reservations system for park campgrounds

and facilities.

Also, salaries for rangers and superintendents increased substantially, and those park positions were folded into a new "banding" effort of the state personnel system.

State parks officials said Tillotson often did yeoman's work, tackling complex and difficult tasks with an upbeat and calm demeanor and an overriding sense of duty.

During the retirement ceremony, Ledford told her, "What changes, Susan, you've experienced and a lot of it you shepherded. Many of them would not have been as elaborate or as effective if you had not been there."

Tillotson "raised the bar for everyone" said Kelly Chandler, an officer of the Administrative Professional Council, a

technical training group for the parks' administrative staffs and an innovation that Tillotson helped to rejuvenate.

"For the rest of the time I work for state parks, I will work to make Susan proud," Chandler said.

Tillotson said she won't miss the pile of paperwork that top-level park administration brings, but there are many things she will miss, including the mission and the particular culture of the state parks. That culture is one of collaboration, commitment and a sense of family, she said.

"I've worn the green and gray with pride and I'll miss being part of this profession," she said. "I will miss being part of something every day that's special and makes a difference, not only today but forever."



# North Carolina State Parks

## Monthly Attendance Report

### November, 2007

(ATTENDANCE TOTALS FOR CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK NOT AVAILABLE)

NC STATE PARK	November 2007	TOTAL Nov-07	November 2006	TOTAL Nov-06	% CHANGE (2007/2006) Nov YTD	
Carolina Beach	33,192	508,030	30,432	472,678	9%	7%
Cliffs of the Neuse	0	123,503	6,881	102,258	-100%	21%
Crowders Mountain	36,447	383,933	35,008	349,254	4%	10%
Eno River	24,272	323,419	22,155	293,224	10%	10%
Falls Lake	21,261	874,917	26,706	926,419	-20%	-6%
Fort Fisher	25,288	820,716	19,103	601,629	32%	36%
Fort Macon	62,382	1,171,156	56,826	1,168,034	10%	0%
Goose Creek	11,573	160,741	12,439	145,414	-7%	11%
Gorges	7,122	136,067	6,710	109,543	6%	24%
Hammocks Beach	6,603	113,829	6,108	73,638	8%	55%
Haw River	2,722	23,436	2,795	2,795	-3%	738%
Hanging Rock	28,670	459,021	25,138	393,495	14%	17%
Jones Lake	2,802	68,085	3,786	65,509	-26%	4%
Jordan Lake	0	1,132,995	63,991	988,265	-100%	15%
Jockey's Ridge	54,630	1,485,163	70,361	1,008,657	-22%	47%
Kerr Lake	46,212	1,111,708	24,488	1,128,244	89%	-1%
Lake James	12,690	367,582	11,486	646,346	10%	-43%
Lake Norman	30,063	495,666	17,694	426,780	70%	16%
Lake Waccamaw	1,142	82,498	3,944	86,022	-71%	-4%
Lumber River	5,388	77,416	6,984	76,322	-23%	1%
Merchants Millpond	14,484	139,205	18,044	240,969	-20%	-42%
Medoc Mountain	3,664	55,023	3,813	52,985	-4%	4%
Mount Jefferson	6,532	93,188	8,704	86,202	-25%	8%
Mount Mitchell	12,854	313,884	8,123	284,527	58%	10%
Morrow Mountain	29,560	386,860	28,700	341,082	3%	13%
New River	7,096	183,742	6,464	181,875	10%	1%
Occoneetchee Mountain	6,149	60,539	4,577	52,816	34%	15%
Pettigrew	4,823	62,407	2,667	68,429	81%	-9%
Pilot Mountain	36,540	388,896	32,550	378,445	12%	3%
Raven Rock	10,232	95,138	8,545	93,165	20%	2%
Singletary Lake	2,071	31,077	1,861	34,652	11%	-10%



## ***Our Mission Remains...***

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;  
to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;  
to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources for all citizens and visitors.

*8,000 copies of this public document were printed  
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## ***SAFETY ZONE***

### **KEEP KINDS SAFE IN THE KITCHEN**

- ✓ Place potentially dangerous chemicals such as cleaning supplies in cabinets which can be secured with child-proof latches.
- ✓ Never leave utensils such as knives out or in dish drainers where children can reach them.
- ✓ Make sure large appliances such as stoves are secured to prevent tipping.
- ✓ Always place hot pans on back burners before leaving them unattended; never set hot beverages on the edge of counters.

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